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THE 'INTENSITY' PROBLEM AND DEMOCRATIC THEORY

by
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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled: The 'Intensity' Problem and Democratic Theory, submitted by Roger W. Burke, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

FOR MY MOTHER

ABSTRACT

This thesis constitutes an attempt at clarifying the problems raised by the phenomenon of intensity of opinion for the kind of political organization which we call "democracy", and therefore for the democratic theorist. It is argued here that some democratic theorists, who have addressed themselves specifically to the problem of "intensity", have tended to confuse the ethical aspects of the problem with the more practical or empirical aspects of it -- that because of the difficulty (or perhaps impossibility) of making ethical interpersonal comparisons, these theorists have tended to circumvent the problem, which is worthy, and capable, of examination on empirical grounds.

The central conclusion reached in this essay is that the democratic theorist who wishes to consider the problem of "intensity" can, at the present time, most fruitfully turn his attention to an examination of the sorts of empirical conditions which he must obtain in a political system before what we now term the "democratic" method of decision-making can be justified as an indispensable part of the institutional complex of that system.

INTRODUCTION

Most political theorists would maintain that a democracy is a political system in which all citizens, or those representing their interests, are provided with the opportunity of deciding between various alternatives of public policy by the method of majority rule. They would also maintain that this method must be limited by certain formal safeguards to ensure that all claims relevant to any decision have the opportunity of being articulated, and hence that the government in power has the opportunity at least to meet demands made of it. For when demands are made of a government that it is either unwilling to satisfy or incapable of meeting, the integrity and stability of the political system may be threatened.

The purpose of this essay is to raise the problem of intensity of opinion in terms of how it might affect demands that are made by individuals in a political system, and therefore, to what extent it should be considered as a practical problem for political systems in maintaining stability. The problem of "intensity" as it will be considered here occurs then for the democratic theorist in evaluating the extent to which a political system, which makes decisions according to the "democratic method" (i.e., limited majority

rule), is able to adjust to demands made of it by intensely partisan minorities. Since the extent to which any political system is stable is some measure of the extent to which it is able to meet demands made of it, a political system in which decisions are reached by the "democratic method" can maintain its stability and integrity only when the demands of minorities holding intense preferences are met to the degree that no sizeable minority of this kind views itself as a perpetual loser in the system, hence becoming alienated and frustrated, and posing a threat to the foundations of the system.

The term "democracy" is very difficult to define. It is often used as a catch-all term for everything good in political systems. If there is a comprehensive defininition of this sort for "democracy", no attempt will be made here to articulate it. If the problem of "intensity" raises a special moral problem for "democratic" political systems, the considerations of it is beyond the scope of this essay. Clearly the problem of intensity of opinion may have great import for considerations of political obligation, particularly in relation to civil disobedience, but again, a comprehensive discussion of these questions is beyond the scope of this essay. Since these are complex and difficult questions, it is better to exclude them completely than to give them a sketchy, superficial treatment for the sake of

brevity in a small space.

The main body of this essay is divided into three chapters. The first chapter attempts to define the problem in terms of what it means to talk about "intensity", how intensity of opinion affects individual action in the political sphere, why we might want to measure the phenomenon, and how we might go about it. Therefore, consideration is given to how some empiricists, particularly those concerned with public opinion research, have treated intensity of opinion in their work. Consideration is also given to the difficulties encountered by some contemporary democratic theorists in raising the problem of "intensity".

The second chapter is concerned with suggesting the extent to which the question of "intensity" may be raised as a problem in democratic theory per se, and therefore considers the implications and, to some extent, the logic of some "fundamental" principles of "democracy", as articulated by some democratic theorists. Those specifically considered are the principles of "political equality" and "majority rule", in terms of how they relate to the procedures implied by the "democratic method" and, in turn, to the problem of "intensity".

In the third and final chapter, more precise consideration is given to the implications of the rules of the

"democratic method", the purpose being to determine whether or not there is anything implied by these rules that would render consideration of the problem of "intensity", in this sort of political system, of little or no significance. Therefore, the question of under what conditions the "democratic method" may or may not be said to deal with the effects of intensity of opinion, of which we are now aware, is raised.

Finally, consideration is given to the problem of what might be required in conjunction with adherence to the rules of the "democratic method" to assure the continued stability and integrity of the political system. Particular emphasis is given to some theories of a "democratic consensus" (empirical and non-empirical), as these are helpful in gaining some insight into the extent to which the problem of "intensity" might be viewed as a problem of relevance to contemporary democratic theory.

CHAPTER I

Because individuals have widely varying attitudinal structures, value systems, and emotional and intellectual dispositions, they affirm their preferences in different ways in terms of content or direction, and in terms of intensity. When alternatives are relatively clear cut, there is no difficulty in characterizing an opinion or preference in terms of its content. Therefore, the numerical extent of the support any political alternative may enjoy can be determined by enumerating the voting individuals who express a positive preference for it. However, in equating contending political forces in terms of their influence on the political processes, it is reasonable to suppose that the extent of opinionated support for each alternative course of action should be considered on a qualitative as well as on a quantitative dimension. Unfortunately, the qualitative characteristics of an opinion are not readily amenable to measurement.

The problem of the depth of opinion, or the intensity of belief, is one of the basic questions in the measurement of public opinion, and most opinion studies that have been done in the last two or three decades have attempted to incorporate some device into the research design that would measure the intensity of opinion specifically.[1] This presents a severely difficult research

problem, but one that may be worth trying to solve, for a number of reasons.

Prima facia, we would readily admit that felt preference intensity is sometimes a fact, and in many political situations we may feel that differences in preference intensity should be incorporated into a social decision. We may also, without great difficulty, formulate some plausible preliminary hypotheses concerning the effects of differences between individuals in the strength or depth of feeling, on the way in which they react, individually or collectively, to their social environment. D. Katz suggests that:

> . . . if we are able to measure the intensity of opinion as well as its direction, we shall know a great deal more about the individuals whose opinions we are studying. We shall know, for one thing, something of the permanence of opinion, its crystallization, the extent to which it is structured, and the degree to which an individual may be expected to be suggestible. If we can determine the intensity of opinion, we should be able to predict much more accurately than we might otherwise what action opinion may lead to, for example, whether or not an individual with a given opinion holds that opinion strongly enough to take the trouble to go out and vote for it or fight for it. If such an opinion is held rigidly enough to be called a prejudice, we should be able to predict the success of those who want to proselyte this opinion. On the other hand, if opinion is strongly held but if all channels of action to which the opinion is directed are blocked, then we can predict frustration to arise either in the individual or group more rapidly than it would if the opinion were only mildly held. If we can break opinion down by intensity, then we should be able to divide any given population accordingly into more and more precisely defined groups. For these reasons, among others, measurement of the intensity of opinion assumes enormous significance.[2]

If the distribution of intensities within a population is related to government action, that is, if the presumption can be made that individuals holding preferences of relatively high intensity act in significantly different ways than individuals holding preferences of relatively low intensity on any particular political issue or group of issues, then it is plausible to suppose further, that the location of intensities within the general patterns of distribution of opinion may be important in fixing the context for government action. Also, since individual volitions are the products of the social process and social environment, a knowledge of the distribution of intensities may, to a very large extent, tangibly reflect the social environment, which is demonstrably important in fixing the context for government action.

The research problem is to measure intensity empirically. To say that an individual holds a preference strongly or weakly says something about the person, his psychological equipment and commitments, as well as his relationship to some external referent or idea. The presence of this combination of factors causes considerable theoretical difficulties in attaining a valid and reliable concept of intensity, and the concommitant difficulty of determining whether or not the different devices designed to measure intensity are tapping the same dimension. Nevertheless, some crude

appraisals have been made in public opinion research.

In 1946, H. Cantril conducted a study with the express purpose of measuring intensity of opinion on a number of issues of current interest in the United States at that time.[3] The only results of enduring interest from the study suggested a correlation between the degree of intensity with which an attitude or opinion is held, and how extreme it is in its direction -- that is, perhaps, only how far it may deviate from the median on an opinion distribution curve.[4] However, Cantril used a measuring device that has been used to measure intensity of opinion in practically all public opinion studies since then. The device was described by E.A. Suchman in 1950 in the following way:

> A great deal of the experimentation with different methods of asking intensity of feeling has indicated that intensity can be measured by asking after each attitude question about strength of feeling (i.e., 'How strongly do you feel about this?') or degree of certainty (i.e., 'How sure are you of your answer?') or difficulty of choice (i.e., 'How hard was it for you to answer this question?'), or by mixing all three forms of the intensity question. Matched groups, answering the same content questions but different intensity questions, show no significant differences in the intensity curve or the zero range.[5]

Of course, this measure involves merely a verbal self-appraisal of opinion, and may have little or no relation to the way people behave. To establish that intensity of opinion has import for the political system it is evidently necessary to establish a relation between intensity

and political participation or activism. This may be difficult. There are some obvious pitfalls in attempting to relate information on political participation to opinion intensity. For example, strong opinions may result from rather than contribute to a high level of participation. The roots of opinion intensity have been, as yet, in no way clearly identified. Whether it devolves from knowledge, self-interest, moral commitment, psychological predispositions, ego-involvement, anxiety due to a rapidly changing social and political environment, or a combination of two or more of these factors has yet to be determined. In fact, it may be doubted that intensity, as it has been crudely measured in public opinion research to this time, has the same meaning to different individuals, or in different issue situations.

In 1961, V.O. Key, in trying to find some very rough, general indication of the relationship between intensity and participation or involvement, remarked on the paucity of data:

> We lack adequate data on the characteristics and behavior of that thin layer of persons highly active in politics. From daily impressions of politics we feel that persons who have opinions of high intensity are likely to seek energetically to achieve the ends in which they believe. These blocs of intense opinion combined with frenetic activity slip through the tines of a national sampling procedure. Yet the endeavors of these small blocs of opinion-holders often energize -- or brake -- the machinery of the state. Little bands of dedicated souls leave their

> clear imprint on public policy. The duck hunters, the lovers of the national parks, the forestry zealots, the disciples of Izaak Walton, and many other small groups have left their tracks in the statute books. In countless other instances, small blocs of intense opinion are accompanied by exertions of influence that suffice to obstruct action. Yet these patterns of opinion and action can be identified only by far more intensive sampling of attitudes than has occurred.[6]

Key did find that persons whose behavior could be considered a manifestation of attributes equivalent to intensity of opinion seemed more likely to vote. However, this conclusion is somewhat less than startling, particularly in view of the fact that voting is the very minimum degree of participation, and is usually "expected" of a citizen. Many individual motivations for voting may have little, if anything, to do with stands on political issues. Carrying his analysis a step further, Key found that; ". . . those persons with high levels of participation -- that is, persons who participated in some kind of activity in addition to the mere act of voting -- held opinions of somewhat higher average intensity than did those persons of low levels of participation." However, he asserted that: "In no instance would it be safe to attribute much increase in participation to intensity of opinion alone. . . ."[7]

Although there is some small relationship between intensity and level of participation, there are other related findings in Key's analysis which render the

correlation quite useless. It was found that many persons with a very low level of participation had intense opinions, and also that, ". . . the variation within levels of involvement of the proportions with intense opinions on the series of issues indicates that intensity is a factor largely independent of involvement."[8] This is to say only that there is no necessary connection between opinion intensity and level of involvement. However, a situation in which blocs of electors with intense opinions and low levels of participation exist, may indicate a great deal about the health of a political system, in terms of the willingness and capability of the government to deal with demands made of it. Key suggests that small pockets of people with intense opinions, who feel alienated from the political system, are likely to have an extremely low sense of political efficacy and therefore, no motivation to exert themselves politically, even to the extent of registering a vote.[9]

> The combination of intense opinion and low sense of efficacy with alienation from participation in the political system may not be the most healthy condition for a democratic order. Such population blocs may be of serious consequence only when they are of considerable magnitude. Such blocs may, if sufficiently agitated, seek to work out their concerns through mob action or by other more direct routes to their ends than the tortuous processes of popular politics; nonparticipators may yearn for short-cuts. As intense opinion is channeled into meaningful political participation, the persons involved may learn to live with the fabianism of public action.[10]

Now, all studies indicate that a measurement of the intensity of an opinion is, to some extent, a measurement of its direction or content. In other words, the more extreme an opinion is "generally" considered to be in its direction, the more intensely it is likely to be held. Since the extremity of an opinion held by an individual or group of individuals on an issue can be gauged solely in terms of the degree of agreement characterizing the opinions of other individuals or groups of individuals in the society of the same issue, degree of intensity is, to some extent, degree of consensus. If one or more substantial blocs of individuals intensely hold incompatible opinions on an issue, we may of course assert that, at least on that issue, there is a lack of consensus among the members of that society. Clearly, the mechanisms of the governing process will work a great deal more smoothly in grappling with an issue there is some basic consensus of opinion, than where there is lack of consensus. Where there are large blocs of intense opinion, a government may be faced with violent action by these blocs, and may have to resort to dictatorial methods to maintain itself in a position of authority or have its decisions prevail.

Setting aside for a moment the questions raised by the prescriptions of many traditional democratic theorists concerning compromise, and democracy as a way of life,

surely it would be naive to expect that any government would receive consensual support on every issue of public policy, or on the issue of its continuance in office. But this does not mean that in resolving each issue with which it is faced a government must anticipate the possibility of a revolution or civil war. Intensity of opinion, as measured, is not usually the result of strong feelings for or against a question, whatever it may be, by groups of belligerent individuals. The level or degree of opinion intensity depends very much on the issue at hand.[11] By the same token, the quality of opinion on individual issues may vary greatly within a given population. As Key remarks:

> Obviously an issue may become of concern to a person in many ways, and that concern may take different forms. A proposed law that would put a man out of business may arouse an intense opinion. A proposed law that clashes with a man's ethical notions, although it would affect him personally not at all, may also arouse an intense opinion, but on a different sort of foundation. It may well be that most issues have such slight effect or potential effect on most individuals that it requires a considerable acculturation to democratic processes -- or development of a sense of identification with the community -- for a person to feel intensely about many issues. At any rate, the range of opinion intensity must be quite wide within the population generally, and our measures of intensity capture only the most meager suggestion of its variety.[12]

Key implies, then, that the quality of an individual's opinion, and his level of intensity, may change according to the kind of issue with which he is faced. S.I. Benn and R.S. Peters may be describing the same sort of

phenomenon in indicating that expressions of opinion vary depending on whether or not an issue has a moral "personality":

> There are some issues, of course, which can produce massive and definite expressions of opinion, capable of inducing a government to change its minds. Questions of sexual behavior, capital punishment, and pacifism are of this sort. Differences on such matters depend less, however, on technical conditions than on moral principles, and the views people hold are rarely related to any special interest they have in the matter. . . . In cases of this sort, the technical incompetence of the ordinary citizen is beside the point; and there is no reason to suppose that on such matters governments are less subject to passion and prejudice than anyone else.[13]

Is it then the case that there are certain kinds of issues which a "democratic" government must avoid if it wishes to avoid violent upheaval, or reversion to dictatorial methods of governing? This hardly seems reasonable, for it verges on the trite to suggest that the kinds of issues to which Benn and Peters refer could possibly arise at nearly every step in the governing process. Democratic theorists do not, on the whole, consider the possibility of implementing a formal social decision-making rule designed to cope with the problems of preference intensity, that is, to weigh as well as count individual preferences. Does this mean that a "democratic" government could, or at some point must, use dictatorial methods of enforcing its decisions and maintaining itself in power? Although the crude measures of intensity that have been used, for the most part in public

opinion research, can, as V.O. Key suggests, hope to give only the most meager suggestion of the variety and range of the phenomenon within a population, it may be of great help to the democratic theorist, who surely must attempt to formulate an answer to this question.

The significance of this research for the democratic theorist is somewhat at issue, largely because the measures of intensity depend on some sort of overt behavior. This consideration has caused great confusion in dealing with the problem.

R.A. Dahl suggests that there are two reasons why it might be important to estimate intensity of opinion. The first reason he claims to be "essentially ethical in character", for, in a situation where a choice must be made between mutually exclusive alternatives of action, ". . . if the outcome is otherwise a matter of indifference, it might seem fair to establish the rule that the individual with the more intense preference should get his way."[14] The second reason Dahl suggests, ". . . arises from a desire to predict the stability of a democratic system and perhaps even to design rules to guarantee its stability."[15] He wishes to draw a clear distinction between these two kinds of concerns on the basis of a rather strange, unclear characterization of the results of any behavioral test for intensity. There is no way of measuring, Dahl asserts, the kind of intensity

which is at stake in a consideration of the ethical problem. This he calls "sensate" intensity.[16] The problem of stability is considered to be of a "different kind":

> For we are concerned with how people in the political system 'feel' only so that we can predict how they are likely to act. If we can predict how they are likely to act from observations of other overt behavior, then we do not need to worry ourselves with the question whether we really know how they feel.[17]

This raises the question of what the crude empirical measures of intensity we now have are measuring, if they are not measuring intensity of sensations. To assume that there is no connection between the way in which individuals act, and the way they "feel", seems tantamount to assuming that human behavior is totally unpredictable. If this is the case, there is little point to trying to predict the stability of the political system. Dahl seems to suggest that while a measure based on overt behavior may give us some idea of how an individual "feels", it does not give us any idea of how he "really feels". But an individual's relationship to some external referent or idea is defined by his attitudinal structure, value system, and emotional and intellectual dispositions. There is no question but that we can get a reasonably good idea of how individuals compare on the basis of these characteristics, which can be measured, in a fairly sophisticated manner, from their overt behavior. This may be a matter for the student of

psychology, but it also must concern the democratic theorist who wishes to grapple with the problem of intensity. For, when we state decisively that intensity of opinion may change quantitatively (and perhaps qualitatively), with the consideration of different kinds of issues, we are concerned with the effect of the raising of a certain kind of issue on an individual's attitudinal structure and value system. If Dahl means to suggest that the measurement of "sensate" intensities, or how an individual "really feels", entails cutting back further than this, then we are indeed presented with a problem that is almost impossible to solve, analytically or empirically. At any rate, it would first be necessary to draw a clear distinction between "sensate" intensity, and intensity that is recognizable or definable from overt behavior. Dahl does not give any indication of what form this distinction might take.

The important point is, that the statement-form; A prefers x to y more than B prefers y to x; is empirical, and the question of the extent to which we can prove or disprove statements of this form is an empirical matter. There is not some point at which it may take on a mystical character. It is in principle capable of solution, and at least we may claim that if we are possessed of some knowledge of each of the individuals, we can make a rough appraisal.

In an argument very much resembling that of Dahl, W. Kendall and G.W. Carey[18] encounter what could perhaps be called a more superficial difficulty in attempting, like Dahl, to separate the intensity problem into two somewhat distinct aspects relating to democratic theory, the first involving ethical considerations, and the second involving practical considerations relating to the stability of the democratic system. They state that:

> The 'case' for weighing preferences in order to assure 'stability', whatever its merits or demerits, is clearly incompatible with the case for weighing preferences in the name of 'fairness', save as we are prepared to assume that fairness and stability always come down, in politics, to one and the same thing.[19]

Here, again, it is important to note that the weighing of preferences is an empirical matter. What sort of 'case' can be made for the importance of the results of weighing preferences, for democratic theory, or, what can be done with these results, depends on the level of sophistication attained by the measuring devices, and on the comprehensiveness and significance of the results. Kendall and Carey imply that fairness and stability are not, in politics, the same thing. Surely this depends on what is meant by the terms "fairness", and "stability". Clearly, they would want to claim that a "stable" democracy is a different thing from a "stable" dictatorship. If we want to say, in this context, that "fairness" is something like

informal consideration of preference intensity in social decision-making, our crude measures of intensity might lead us to the conclusion that in a democracy fairness and stability do come down pretty much to one and the same thing. In fact, this is the conclusion which Kendall and Carey eventually arrive at, thus refuting their earlier statement.

The means which Kendall and Carey prescribe for taking account of differences in intensity involve every system having;

> . . . built-in facilities for correct reciprocal anticipations, on the part of groups and, ultimately, of individuals, of the intensity of each other's reactions, favorable or unfavorable, to the alternative courses of political behavior open to each.[20]

As it turns out, the extent to which a political system provides mechanisms for this kind of implicit logrolling tempered with wisdom and self-restraint, allows us not only to make a judgment about the stability of the system, but to make a concurrent ethical judgment. They point out that a democracy which fails to provide facilities for "correct reciprocal anticipations" is liable to condemnation because:

> By doing so, it both renders itself inherently unstable (an 'empirical' judgment) and lays itself open to the charge (a 'normative' or 'ethical' judgment) that, by failing to elicit the maximum of cooperation available to it for the achievement of its objectives

> (which, arguendo, we assume to be 'good'), it is self-defeating and therefore 'bad'.[21]

It would seem, however, that providing facilities for "correct reciprocal anticipations" in modern mass society would present very severe, if not insurmountable, organizational difficulties. These difficulties could be resolved if our measures of intensity could provide us with enough information to contrive a social decision-making rule wherein each individual's decision would include not only preference orders, but also preference intensities. The form such a rule would take is more rigorously formulated by the economist Y. Murakami:

> Let us take a quadruple of alternatives (x, y, z, w) in an issue. We have been assuming that an individual orders those alternatives according to his preference -- say, he prefers x to y and z to w. For an introduction of preference intensity, we further assume that he is capable of telling whether the degree to which he prefers x to y is greater, equal or smaller than the degree to which he prefers z to w. In other words, the individual is assumed to order . . . not only the alternatives themselves but also the 'intervals' between any pair of alternatives.[22]

Logically, then, we ought to be able to construct a numerical index representing preference intensity, as well as preference order; a kind of latter-day version of Benthams' utility calculus. There are, however, as Murakami points out, some questions concerning the workability of such a social decision-making rule, involving an

individual's representation of his own preference intensity.[23]

In the first place, we may be sceptical of an individual's introspective ability to give consistent numerical representation of the quality of his preference. This is, of course, a massive empirical problem. But, even assuming that we had the information necessary to assert that individuals do have this ability, we would probably suspect that a person would tend to overstate, or understate, his preference intensity concerning the alternative he preferred, for strategic reasons. Because of this element of uncertainty, Murakami claims, ". . . a voting procedure involving numerical expressions is likely to be unstable." He asserts that: "Numerical voting is logically possible, even workable in our sense, but may be held to be impractical because of its instability."[24] This consideration may constitute a first-level answer to the question, phrased by Kendall and Carey, of why a so-called "frivolous majority" would turn out to be "frivolous".[25]

At any rate, our measures of intensity are not, as yet, sophisticated to the degree that we may assuredly demonstrate that an individual possesses the introspective ability to consistently represent, in numerical terms, the quality of his opinions on all issues, or that he would be sincere in these representations. However, we can assuredly

say, that an individual's preference intensity varies according to the character of the issue and alternatives with which he is faced. We can determine this by examining an individual's attitudinal structure and value system. Using this information, we may also be able to specify a kind of rough "indifference point" for any given individual, thereby allowing very crude, by empirically meaningful, comparisons between different individuals on the basis of their intensity of preference. This procedure would involve, to a large extent, the consideration of what K. Arrow calls "irrelevant alternatives".

> The potential usefulness of irrelevant alternatives is that they may permit empirically meaningful interpersonal comparisons. The information which might enable us to assert that one individual prefers alternative x to alternative y more strongly than a second individual prefers y to x must be based on comparisons by the two individuals of the two alternatives, not only with respect to each other but also to other alternatives.[26]

We may, then, want to consider intensity of preference because it may be helpful in predicting the stability of a political system. It may be helpful in determining the extent to which any government fosters a feeling of political efficacy among the individuals subject to it, or the extent to which the government is able to satisfy demands that are made of it. We are able, through public opinion research, to make some empirically meaningful interpersonal comparisons based on intensity of opinion, although they

are, as yet, very crude. For example, we know that certain kinds of issues are likely to elicit particularly intense feelings, and, if we know enough about an individual, we can estimate with some assurity how intensely he would feel about possible alternative courses of action in the resolution of any given issue. As far as incorporating these comparisons into a formal decision-making procedure goes, there are as yet many unsolved practical difficulties that would render such a procedure at least very unreliable. However, this is certainly possible in principle.

Whatever it might mean to talk about ethical interpersonal comparisons, this in no way confounds the possibility of measuring individual preference intensities, and, by the same token, whatever moral reasons might be given as to why intensity of opinion should or should not be considered in social decision-making, they are not relevant in considering the phenomenon in terms of its import for the political system. It is, to say the least, by no means clear how a special moral case for the weighing of preferences according to their intensity could be made that would be remote from these kinds of considerations.

CHAPTER II

Although it is possible to make empirically meaningful comparisons between individuals in terms of their intensity of opinion on political issues, and hence possible, in principle, to contrive a formal decision-making procedure that would take intensity into account, democratic theorists have not argued that individual preferences ought to be weighed, in this manner, as well as counted. In this chapter, I propose to consider the question of whether or not the "logic" of some of the theories of democracy in any sense precludes the possibility of incorporating this kind of preference weighing device into the mechanisms of social decision-making.

All of the theories which I consider include, in one way or another, the notions of "political equality" and "majority rule" as fundamental justificatory principles of political democracy. Hence, the procedure usually considered to be "democratic" in the making of decisions involves one man having one vote, with each vote being counted "equally", and the alternative receiving the numerical preponderance of votes winning the day. By examining some of these theories of democracy, we can gain some insight into what, in the first place, is being claimed by the notion of "political equality", and secondly, what is implied by the majoritarian principle. In this way we can determine

whether or not the democratic theorist must assert that weighing as well as counting votes is "undemocratic", or invalidate his theory.

Now, prima facia, the counting of noses may be demonstrably absurd. To assert any literal meaning for a claim of equality of men, in mind, body, or attainments, is manifestly contrary to experience and observation. Moreover, our empirical data on intensity leaves no question but that some people feel more strongly about certain issues or decisions than others. It would seem, then, that democratic theorists are faced with the great practical problem of reconciling the majoritarian principle with percepts of justice and fair play. For example, we may conceive a society where the minority prefers an alternative much more ardently than the majority prefers the contrary alternative. We may, then, well doubt that the majority principle still makes sense, and conclude that it is worth while trying to consider preference intensity formally in the mechanisms of social decision-making. In other words, if individuals can be determined to be, on an empirical basis, unequal in certain respects, as in fact they can, must the theory of political democracy be put in the awkward position of describing and prescribing a system which, by giving equality to unequals, results in substantial inequality?[1]

The answer to this question hinges upon the

interpretation that is given to the notions of "political equality" and "majority rule" in democratic theory. If the claim for political equality is in any sense purportedly derived from an empirical claim of individual human equality, then the theorist has some serious explaining to do. If, on the other hand, "political equality" embodies an intrinsicially ethical claim, we may want to know what relationship it has to the resolution of political issues.

In fact, the argument surrounding the claim for political equality is a muddle. As traditionally housed in the rambling and somewhat rundown mansion of natural rights, it has fared rather poorly. The Levellers of early modern democratic theory based their doctrine of "consent" upon the tradition of natural rights. This doctrine, founded on the law of God and the law of nature, defies succinct thought, and in practical terms reduces to impossibilist nonsense. As A.D. Lindsay points out;

> . . . the practical measure for which they are contending is that everyone should have a right to take part in the electing of legislators. But to say that you have chosen your legislator because you have voted against him is a curious argument, frequently as it is used by those who wish to base government on consent.
>
> And yet, unless you accept that absurdity, those insisters on consent must admit that every legislator is invalidly elected who is not elected unanimously. That would of course make government impossible.[2]

The "mystical" equality of men, derived from the

doctrine of natural rights, does not go far toward clearing what might seem to be the untidy philosophical character of democratic arrangements. Even if we were to discard completely one great source of confusion; the mythological prehistory of a supposed state of nature; and take "natural rights" to mean simply the right of an individual to some kind of miminal consideration because he is a human being, rather than because he has "natural rights", or has, somewhere along the line, given his consent to government, we are still left with the problems of determining the range or extent of this consideration, and the terms on which these "human rights" are to be extended to individuals. This conception of the equality of men seems equally to defy justification in meaningful terms. C.K. Allen asserts that:

> It means that every citizen, of whatever capacity, is entitled to what a German jurist calls 'consideration' (Achten) from all other members of society. Strong or weak, effective or noneffective, he is to be regarded as deserving such opportunities of self-development as he is capable of grasping, or even sheer protection and subsistence if he is incapable, through natural defects or undeserved misfortunes, of maintaining any foothold for himself in society. This view, that the human being, merely because he is such, possesses a quality which is worth safeguarding for its own sake is clearly a matter of faith, or hope, or charity, or all three. It cannot be justified on grounds of materialistic logic or expediency.[3]

Nevertheless, faith, hope and charity has not satisfied some theorists as a foundation of the claim to political equality. In hopes of resolving some of the ambiguities

inherent in this view there have been attempts to arrive at a minimal specification of human beings, or some descriptive-comparative sense in which we are all "fundamentally" alike. For example, N. Rotenstreich claims that democracy is "rule by principles" rather than by "majority" and attempts to explicate the "principle of equality" in the following manner:

> . . . the idea of equality values all men alike and determines all political and human rights in terms of a single principle, the generic essence of man, that is, his rational nature, which is one and the same in all men.[4]

It is difficult to determine whether this assertion is meant to be factual, or normative, or whether Rotenstreich means "rational nature" to be a defining characteristic of man. If the latter is the case, the claim takes the form of the analytic statement: "every man has a rational nature", which tells us nothing about man or his "rational nature". However, since Rotenstreich is making a claim for equality, to determine political and "human" rights, it appears as though the only way to make sense of it is to assume that he is claiming that "essential rationality", which can only mean rational capacity, is an empirical quality fairly representative of man's nature. But surely, it may be objected, rational capacities, often differing greatly from individual to individual, demand unequal treatment. If we are to assume, then, that each man is "valued alike" or

deserves some "consideration" because he is, to some degree, rational, we must, unless Rotenstreich's assertion is to reduce to a tautology, arbitrarily establish an origin and unit for the measurement of rationality. At this point we could, perhaps, justify the destruction of all our defectives and recalcitrants. For, it is a short step from this kind of measure to the assertion that the extent to which each man may be considered should depend upon the degree to which he is ascertained to be rational. How does this square with the notion of "political equality"? And, most important, if we can obtain a precise and uniform measurement of an intensive magnitude like rationality, is there any reason why the same could not be done for intensity of preference?

Many of these same problems are encountered by the theorist who asserts the equality of men in terms of their being members of a given class. An example of this position is the theory of M.C. Swabey, who asserts that while equality of men must be rejected as a fact, the postulate of "equality of consideration" must be retained, serving as a statement of a "feasible political program" or "guiding idea for social endeavor".[5]

The postulate of "equal consideration", according to Swabey, involves a kind of numerical justice which she initially identifies as being embodied in the relationship

between the individual citizen and the legal and political institutions of the state. She claims that:

> Citizenship, being determined by the law or constitution, takes account of persons only as examples of a class, not as individuals. What is created by definition is always universal. The state is interested in the citizen as he shares the common nature of citizenship; in so far as he claims peculiarities as a person unlike other persons, it tends to ignore him. In this sense, the democratic state while maintaining the integrity and distinctness of individuals denies their privileged uniqueness, recognizing as does science that its classifications and laws hold of beings fundamentally assumed alike.[6]

In democracy, then, according to Swabey, individuals fall into the logical class of all citizens and are considered equally, by the state, as members of this class. In this manner, democracy ". . . aims to associate concrete data with reckonable numbers and to treat them by quantitative methods".[7]

Now, if citizenship as a basis for the classification of individuals pertains to relationships or judgments between individuals in a manner that is fairly precisely defined by law, we may assert that the class of citizens is in some sense "closed" and that there is therefore a presumption of relevance, or a way of determining relevant considerations.[8] In specific cases, then, we may be able to arbitrate between individual claims, giving each equal "consideration". Swabey's claim for "equality of consideration" however goes far deeper than the equality of

citizens before the laws of the state. Her notion of numerical justice involves consideration of the "lot" of each individual as a "human" entity. She states that:

> The basic element in political justice, in our view, is equality rather than differential treatment and proportional reward. For the emphasis in justice falls upon the insight that the lot of each is logically determined by that of all the rest.[9]

Because of the difficulties of discriminating between persons in order to adjust rewards to "specific worths",[10] Swabey holds that "equality of consideration" involves treating of men equally as members of the given class, humanity.

The ambiguities in this theory are very similar to those encountered in the theory claiming equality based on the "generic essence", or "essential rationality" of men. I. Berlin states succinctly:

> The assumption here seems to be that unless there is some sufficient reason not to do so, it is 'natural' or 'rational' to treat every member of a given class (in this case, men) as you treat any member of it. To state the principle in this way leaves open crucial issues: thus it may be justly objected that unless some specific sense is given to 'sufficient reason', the principle can be reduced to a trivial tautology (it is reasonable to act in manner x save in circumstances y, in which it is not rational, and any circumstances may be y); furthermore that since all entities are members of more than one class -- indeed of a theoretically limitless number of classes -- any kind of behavior can be safely subsumed under the general rule enjoining equal treatment -- since unequal treatment of various members of class A can always be represented as equal treatment of them

> viewed as members of some other class B, which in extreme circumstances can be so constructed as to contain no more than one actual member; which can reduce this rule to vacuity. There obviously can exist no formal method of avoiding such reductions to absurdity; they can be rebutted only by making clear what reasons are sufficient and why; and which attributes are relevant and why; and this will depend on the outlooks and scales of value of different persons, and the purposes of a given association or enterprise, in terms of which alone general principles can retain any degree of significance -- whether in theory or practice.[11]

In other words, the equal treatment of individuals according to considerations precisely defined by law may be a reasonably unambiguous notion, but the equal treatment of individuals according to their "lot" as determined by the "lots" of other members of the human race may involve an infinite number of relevant considerations which cannot be formulated in any precise manner. What is "common in humanity" clearly does not provide guidelines for the determination of "specific worths" or, for that matter, any kind of interpersonal comparisons.

It appears impossible to understand the democratic proposition of political equality in terms of a claim to equality based on some sort of minimal specification of human beings. Would we, therefore, as one theorist has suggested, do well to replace controversies about "equality" by arguments about criteria of relevance, for drawing distinctions between individuals?[12] The question makes little sense. What is "relevant" to comparisons between

individuals depends entirely on what we propose to do, what our purposes are in making the comparison, and how any distinction we might wish to make would affect our values, and the individuals concerned. We might give a claim to equal consideration content by establishing a criterion of relevance, but this is not to say that the criterion would in any sense replace the initial claim.

It would seem, then, that isolated the claim for "equality of consideration" does not have a factual, but a moral content. Nor is it in any sense a positive prescription. The democrat may claim that it is "just" to treat individuals in some way equally until grounds for unequal treatment can be precisely determined and proven relevant to the difference in treatment proposed. We may claim that a decision fails to be "just" if it fails to take into account all the relevant circumstances, or if it does take into account extraneous or irrelevant circumstances, but we have no formula for dispensing justice in any absolute or universal sense. S.I. Benn and R.S. Peters point out that:

> Justice demands that we show what is loosely termed 'a sense of proportion' -- an admittedly relevant difference in condition will justify only a reasonable degree of discrimination. There is no formula for determining what differences are relevant for any given purpose, or for measuring the degree of distinction they would justify; we can only formulate principles of procedure, namely, that particular distinctions must be sanctioned by rules, and that criteria enshrined in rules must be ultimately justified

> in terms of the generally beneficent consequences of adopting and maintaining them.[13]

Whether or not the consequences of any political action affecting the members of a society are beneficent depends upon the goals of the political system. For the consequences of an action to be determined in terms of these goals, it is necessary that the goals be specified in meaningful (i.e., not metaphysical) terms.

In an argument for political equality that is somewhat different from the preceding ones, R.A. Dahl and C.E. Lindblom contend that we may urge political equality as a goal in some societies, either because we have a "culturally inspired" feeling of "sympathetic identification" with other members of the society which presents us with ". . . the intellectual difficulty of finding any rational basis for concluding that the preferences of some people <u>should</u> be counted more heavily in the process of government than the preferences of others", or, for the strategic reason that ". . . we cannot be confident of continued membership in an elite group whose preferences would be counted for more rather than less."[14] This may be true in a limited sense, although surely if we could demonstrate that an issue affected some individuals much more greatly than it affected others we could conceivably consider this as a rational basis for counting the preferences of the former

more heavily. However, the Dahl and Lindblom argument for political equality involves far more than these kinds of considerations, for, as they assert, one becomes more and more aware that it is the only "rational" alternative ". . . as one sees more and more the consequences of dictatorship with each passing year."[15]

Dahl and Lindblom construe their claim for political equality to be commensurate with the goals they postulate as being criteria for evaluating alternative "politico-economic techniques". These are goals of "freedom, rationality, and democracy", on which ". . . intelligent citizens of western societies could no doubt quickly agree."[16] The goal of "political equality" corresponds particularly to the higher goal of "freedom", since, if held as a goal, it gives rise to a condition necessary to "freedom", which Dahl and Lindblom call "subjective equality":

> The condition of subjective equality exists wherever, in any specific situation in which more people rather than less can have the opportunity to achieve their goals, the decision is for the greater number rather than for any lesser number.[17]

Dahl and Lindblom admit, and rightfully so, that the goal of "freedom" may seem somewhat ambiguous, but in the same breath assert that;

> . . . even if the application of this principle to specific circumstances is one of the most formidable challenges to man's wit and social techniques that he

> could set for himself, its meaning is clear enough to serve as a general guide, a 'set' of mind, a controlling attitude.[18]

Perhaps this is only to say that individuals will be "free" in some obscure sense, if they can convince themselves that they are being considered "equally" despite the fact that they are obviously unequal in many ways. At any rate, this is eminently unsatisfactory. Dahl and Lindblom, in deriving their claim for political equality from some ambiguous notion of freedom, do not contribute to our understanding of the phrase.

The phrase "political equality", as it is used in democratic theory, then, cannot be said to have any descriptive-comparative meaning derived from a literal equality of men, nor can it be construed as a goal for a political system because it creates conditions necessary for the realization of some ultimate "good". The proposition that none shall be held to have a claim to better treatment than another, in advance of good grounds being produced, is a wholly political principle or recommendation, which is couched in terms of ethical recommendation alone. "Good grounds" for differences in treatment, again, depend upon the purposes of any action, and, of course, its likely consequences. Hence, intensity of preference may not be a moral ground for action, but if it is necessary to ensure practical consequences of worth it could be

recommended on moral grounds in an instrumental fashion. This would not violate the principle of political equality.

Nevertheless, we consider the most "democratic" procedure for decision-making to be that of majority rule, and justify the majoritarian principle in terms of the principle of political equality. Thus, if every person is to count equally, it follows that the numerical majority should count more. We may well ask, then, to what extent the democratic theorist is committed to the majoritarian principle, and whether or not there is something implied in the rule itself which would preclude in all situations the necessity, or possibility, of treating people as unequal in any "formal" way.

Let us assume for a moment that in the democratic voting procedure we have found a system which will make democracy function automatically. In other words, that every decision which is arrived at by a majority is, by definition, a "good" decision in terms of some "democratic" notion of equalitarian justice. This is the theoretical basis of the classical doctrine volonté générale, based on the presumption that the "majority will" is always representative of the "common good". If this is the case, we may have a justification for the absolute rule of majorities, and therefore claim that the democrat ought to unequivocally acquiese to the decision of the majority.

However, this is clearly not the case. The opinion of the majority as such cannot be justified on empirical or metaphysical grounds. The metaphysical justification, which identifies the will of the majority with a "general will" common to all members of the society, is eminently unsatisfactory. The empirical justification, which hinges on the claim that the decision of the majority is always the "best" decision in any context is equally unsatisfactory in terms of the evidence. Every mechanism of democratic government has a critical point at which it may run wild. How, then, is one to regard a political system which, by "democratic" procedures, severely suppresses minorities or dissenting points of view; is it simply a democracy behaving badly or carelessly?

If there is a "general will" so clearly discernable that it serves as a point of reference for decisions in all specific situations, the problem of the existence of a minority and majority becomes moot. In short, this assertion literally precludes the possibility of the existence of politics. As J. Schumpeter points out;

> . . . democracy, when motivated in this way, ceases to be a mere method that can be discussed rationally like a steam engine or a disinfectant. It actually becomes what from another standpoint I have held it incapable of becoming, viz., an ideal or rather a part of an ideal schema of things. The very word may become a flag, a symbol of all a man holds dear, of everything that he loves about his nation whether rationally contingent to it or not. On the one hand,

> the question how the various propositions implied in the democratic belief are related to the facts of politics will then become as irrelevant to him as is, to the believing Catholic, the question of how the doings of Alexander VI tally with the supernatural halo surrounding the papal office. On the other hand, the democrat of this type, while accepting postulates carrying large implications about equality and brotherliness, will be in a position also to accept, in all sincerity, almost any amount of deviations from them that his own behavior or position may involve. That is not even illogical. Mere distance from fact is no argument against an ethical maxim or a mystical hope.[19]

There are good reasons for implementation of the majority principle in democracies, but they are quite different from the presumption that the "majority will" is always directed to the "common good".

> To argue that the function of government is to implement the General Will to the Common Good does not mean anything, unless it means that a government must deal impartially between all conflicting interests. As Rousseau himself saw, that is not at all the same thing as saying that any interest ought to have its way, if it can muster a majority.[20]

The impossibility of demonstrating that decisions reached employing the majority principle are always "best" shows that the traditional grounds for justifying them have been wrongly chosen. We can evaluate any specific decision only by reference to its content. Hence, the decision-making technique of majority rule can be justified solely on empirical grounds as an indispensable part of the institutional complex of a "democratic" governmental system. Its value depends entirely upon the desirability of the latter. Simply following a decision procedure does

not entail that a judicious decision will be reached. Therefore, to subscribe to the principle of majority rule is not to subscribe to a principle of judicious voting. The procedure does not contain any inherent guidelines to aid the individual in deciding how to vote judiciously. The subscription is to an adjudicative method that specifies the manner in which disputes of a certain kind are to be settled.

The ethical recommendation that each individual ought to be treated as being equal to each other individual, in advance of good grounds being produced for differences in treatment, certifies the integrity of the method of making decisions in a democracy, and not the "rightness" of the outcome. Political equality entails the moral rightness of a majority to decide. This does not preclude the possibility that the majority might well advance what one might wish to call "morally wrong" or "bad" policies according to some standard, in which case something might be said about their moral values and their ability to evaluate outcomes.

Democracy, then, cannot be said to be "rule by principles" rather than by majority, as Rotenstreich would have us believe.[21] If men were to examine the articulated principles of "democracy" for their logical consistency, and then to examine the procedures in terms of the principles, they would likely find that the principles themselves had

little to do with logic, and that these principles were not in congruence with the procedures. It can only be said that any particular decision is reached by a majority, which may also be principled. What D. Spitz calls an "appeal to democracy", or more precisely, an appeal to democratic principles; ". . . overlooks the fact that interests and passions, not principles are the primary movers of men, and that a charge of logical inconsistency does not bite very deep." Also, and perhaps of more importance here; ". . . such an appeal remains always but an invocation of general principles, and as such it cannot resolve particular issues."[22]

The commitment that the democratic theorist makes to the principle of majority rule as a decision procedure is a commitment to a method of procedure for the tentative resolution of disagreements in moral and political ideas. The result of that procedure may always remain subject to continuing inquiry, to criticism, and to the possibility of change. As M. Schiller puts it:

> The commitment generated <u>in virture of the subscription</u> to majority rule is connected with a 'rational ought'. A 'rational ought' is an ought which binds one's actions on pain of being inconsistent with <u>what</u> one has subscribed to. This is why a democrat, in virtue of being a democrat, is under a 'rational ought', which is prima facia binding, to abide by it. Rational oughts, however, do not by themselves determine what, everything considered, one ought to do.[23]

We may want to contend on empirical grounds, then, that the making of decisions on the basis of majority rule is a necessary condition of a functioning democracy, but there is nothing inherent about the principle itself which would prevent a majority from oppressing a minority. A decision reached by the affirmation of a numerical majority is not necessarily, therefore, a "good" or "just" decision. The majoritarian principle involves no more nor less than the convenient rule of law, that the majority in a democracy has a right, according to law, to make law. It serves as the basis for procedure in deliberative assemblies, and contains no inherent ethical validity.

Despite the fact that the democratic theorist must admit that the majority rule has some defeasibility conditions, he nevertheless holds, for a variety of reasons, that its utilization will on the whole lead to more preferable consequences than would any alternative way of settling political disputes. On what basis can one hypothesize that an interest which gains a majority of votes on a particular issue does not act, for example, in complete disregard of a minority which may feel very much more intensely in opposition to the decision than the majority which is in favour of it? S.L. Benn and R.S. Peters contend that:

> To treat democracy as 'rule by the majority' is to miss the point of it, namely, that it requires that every claim should be given a hearing. If it fails in

> this, the majority principle becomes a mere assertion of the power of numbers, and fifty-one in a hundred possess no intrinsic moral authority over the other forty-nine. Democracy involves not only decisions by majority voting, but also that political rights be conceded to minorities. Deny one, and the moral case for the other largely disappears. The democrat confronted by an anti-democratic government is not necessarily bound to respect its authority just because it can claim majority support.[24]

R.A. Dahl claims, however, that the answer is not to be found in the constitutional protection of minorities, as this does not take into account issue intensity by either the minority or majority, but is to be found in the "nature" of the democratic system itself.[25] But how, it may be objected, is one to conceptualize, in a meaningful way, such a nebulous thing as the "nature" of a political system? Perhaps it is to be found in the maxim that every claim should be given a hearing. But the fact that a claim may be somehow given a hearing does not mean that it will be in any sense considered, or integrated into a decision that is ultimately made. To assert, as Benn and Peters do, that groups and individuals, then, must be persuaded; ". . . not of the moral supremacy of the state's purpose, but of its impartiality,"[26] does not take us much further. For, surely the achievement of "wise" decisions in any context ultimately depends upon full utilization of the best judgment of the individuals who are involved in making the decisions. These may be assumed equal for the purpose of voting, but at least in some cases special attributes, such as ability

or knowledge, must be given "special" consideration in the making of decisions.[27] Unless we are to accede to the absurd view that on any given issue one man's opinion is as good as any others, any kind of complete impartiality in the arbitration of disputes would be indeed difficult to prove.

To say that the reason for a democratic system functioning "democratically" must be sought in the "nature" of the system itself rather than in the rules or procedures by which decisions are made is not very satisfactory. Decision-making according to the majoritarian principle may well be the best way of insuring sensitivity to the widest possible range of interests.[28] H.B. Mayo contends that;

> . . . to say that a majority <u>can</u> get its way is not the same as to say that a majority -- even a large one -- always or usually does so. If a large minority strongly resists a policy, it is unenforceable in a democracy. Fortunately -- and it is the best we can hope for -- because of the built-in political safeguards, the political system of a democracy very rarely sets intransigent majority over against irredentist minority.[29]

No doubt, certain political safeguards do have a very great effect upon decisions that are made in democracies. The constitutional protection of minorities, the practice of referring technical matters to select committees, likely made up of members selected by reason of

special competence or interest, and the provision of opportunity for discussion and debate whereby minorities may be heard and may convince their opponents -- all these may tend to promote "sound" decisions. One could reasonably suspect that the members of a majority on an issue do in fact respect very intense minority opinion, within the majority itself, and in the minority, lest they strain the balance, or the "rules of the game". In this sense it may be that the procedures in a democracy set implicit imperatives on regard for intensely held views. This is no doubt to some extent true. By the same token, the procedures and political safeguards that are part of the political system may well provide conditions under which the coercion of any minority is temporary and/or in some way acceptable to the minority -- conditions under which; ". . . the minority, legislative or popular, while obliged to obey a law of which it disapproves, may continue to work freely for the repeal of such a law by persuading a majority to its point of view."[30] Under these conditions, Mayo terms the acquiesence of the minority, "provisional obedience under protest":

> The notion of provisional obedience under protest has two advantages; one, the great civilizing result that although actions may be coerced, the will and thought and speech of dissenters are not coerced; and two, we do not keep the fiction of unanimity where there is none, but are ready to admit the fact of coercion of behavior as well as obligation to obey.[31]

However, the extent to which this kind of arrangement

has a "civilizing result" may be in direct proportion to the degree to which the will, thought and speech of dissenters affect positive compensatory action by the political system.

In the final analysis, a decision can only be evaluated in terms of its content, the consequences of which may then be judged on the basis of how they affect the political system. If a political system which resolves issues by the method which we consider to be "democratic" must be able to satisfy the demands of groups of individuals holding very intense preferences to maintain its stability, and if decision-making according to the majoritarian principle, when combined with certain political and constitutional safeguards, facilitates conditions under which the system is able to satisfy these demands, we may assert that this method is the best that we can devise for this purpose. In other words, if the criteria of decision-making embodied in the "democratic method" is the best way we know of facilitating adjustment to strong demands made of the system without giving rise to alienated or suppressed minorities holding intense opinions, we may claim on empirical grounds that this method is a necessary condition for a stable democracy. However, since any political system involves some coercion of behavior, we may not say that this method is at the same time a sufficient condition for stable democracy. This can only occur when the minority is always willing to give "provisional obedience under protest".

CHAPTER III

We have ascertained[1] that there are good reasons why the democratic theorist should consider intensity of preference as an important element in the resolution of issues in the political system. We have also found that while the measurement of intensity of opinion presents empirical difficulties of considerable magnitude, it is certainly in principle possible, and that consequently it is possible, again in principle, to devise a formal decision-making technique that would weigh as well as count preferences for political alternatives. We have further suggested[2] that there are no logical or a-priori reasons why the democratic theorist could not advocate the adoption of such a rule in view of the principles of "political equality" and "majority rule" if it could be determined that this would yield worthwhile consequences for the political system. For, there is nothing inherent in the decision-making procedure based on the majoritarian principle which precludes the possibility of the suppression of dissenting minorities with intense views, although there are limits to the principle which are part of the decision-making structure of most political systems that we call "democratic". This procedure, along with the rules that govern it, facilitates the making of decisions in an orderly fashion, and in a way that squares with the limitations of the principle

of "political equality".

The rules that govern the procedure may set implicit imperatives on regard for intensely held views, or at least, to some extent provide conditions whereby a minority, holding intense views on any issue, feels that there is a strong possibility that it will eventually get its way by working through the "proper" channels of the political system. However, this is only possible within a limited context -- that the minority is willing to give what Mayo calls, "provisional obedience under protest."[3] Nevertheless, some theorists consider these "rules" to be of overriding importance.

H.B. Mayo, for example, argues that the "built-in political safeguards" in a system which employs the "democratic" method of decision-making, provide the environment of a "free society" where conflicting opinions and interests can find spokesmen and "legitimacy", and where any decision may be revised or reversed as public support shifts.[4] The freedoms which must be provided are those of discussion and association, without which, according to another writer; ". . . there is no way of ensuring that a man will have the chance to state a claim, and no hope that it will receive impartial attention."[5] D. Spitz asserts that:

> Tyranny is not to be sought or found in the principle of egalitarianism, or in the mere insistence on conformity, or in the indiscriminate pressures that are imposed in the effort to bring that conformity about,

> or in the apathy and despair that may enervate a body politic. It exists only where there is an actual denial of democratic rights -- such as the rights of free speech and free political association -- by organized powers, governmental and nongovernmental alike.[6]

However, these "democratic rights" mean very little in themselves, unless it can be demonstrated that the articulation of a point of view affects the political system, or that the seeking of support implies the getting of support. Even at this, we have found that intensity of opinion is not a sufficient condition for participation in politics, so that the intense opinion may not even be articulated.[7] It is one thing to say that each individual in a "democratic" political system has a right to affect legislation,[8] and quite another to say that each individual has a right to affect legislation, <u>providing that he can present a reasonable case</u>, or providing that he can muster the preponderance of support for his point of view. In fact, however, the safeguarding of the rights to freedom of speech and association, embodied in the constitutions of most states we consider to be "democratic", does not, <u>as it stands</u>, entail the consideration of minority opinion, intense or otherwise. Clearly, considerations involving the satisfaction of desires are different from those involving the safeguarding of rights.[9]

Consequently, most democratic theorists hold that

some sort of consensus, in addition to or complementing the institutionalized protection of the freedoms of speech and association, is also a necessary condition for a stable democracy -- a political system in which intense minority views are not suppressed to the extent that sizeable groups of individuals become alienated from the system -- conditions under which compromise is possible, or at least dissenting minorities may be willing to obey "provisionally", under protest. However, there are significant differences of opinion among theorists as to the nature and origin of this "democratic consensus".

The purpose of this chapter is to consider some of these theories of consensus with a view to determining to what extent we may or may not assert that some kind of consensus, characterizing a political system which makes decisions according to the "democratic method" provides the necessary, or also perhaps, sufficient conditions for stability.

The first theories of the "democratic consensus" which require consideration are those which we may term "non-empirical". It may be useful to divide these theories, very roughly, into two categories.

The first views the "consensus" as involving a commitment to a "democratic" way of doing things -- a

commitment to abide by the rules of the "game". This kind of consensus derives from a particular view of life, and of other individuals, and allows for almost unlimited compromise on all issues. The second category of opinion, on the other hand, may be identified as that which views the "consensus" as a commitment to certain moral values or imperatives, which are the context and set limits to the degree of compromise possible -- the extent to which dissenting points of view may be articulated or considered.

There may be overlaps and similarities between these two rough categories of opinion. For one thing, it would be nonsensical to suggest that the resolution of political issues in any society is not, to some extent, limited by the relative socio-ethical norms of that culture. The important point here is that although the first view of the "democratic consensus" may allow for a rough "consensus of intensities"[10] in the sense that most citizens may agree on which issues are most important even if they disagree about what policy to follow on each issue, the second view implies also a "consensus of views" in the sense that, on any important issue,[11] most citizens would also have the same opinion about which policy was the right one to follow.

The first kind of consensus -- entailing the greater degree of flexibility and compromise, on what we

may call issues of importance -- counts discussion as more important than consent, and demands that free, open and candid discussion be facilitated. Since, according to this view, there are no objective absolute "goods", there must be an opportunity for every point of view to be put and considered in the political process, in accordance with what H. Kelson calls the principle of "philosophical relativism":

> To legislate, and that means to determine the contents of a social order, not according to what objectively is the best for the individuals subject to this order, but according to what these individuals, or their majority, rightly or wrongly believe to be their best -- this consequence of the democratic principles of freedom and equality is justifiable only if there is no absolute good. To let a majority of ignorant men decide instead of reserving the decision to the only one who, in virtue of his divine origin or inspiration, has the exclusive knowledge of the absolute good -- this is not the most absurd method if it is believed that such knowledge is impossible and that, consequently, no single individual has the right to enforce his will upon the others. That value judgments have only relative validity -- one of the basic principles of philosophical relativism -- implies that opposite value judgments are neither logically nor morally excluded. One of the fundamental principles of democracy is that everybody has to respect the political opinion of everybody else, since all are equal and free. Tolerance, minority rights, freedom of speech, and freedom of thought, so characteristic of democracy, have no place within a political system based on the belief in absolute values. This belief irresistibly leads -- and has always led -- to a situation in which the one who assumes to possess the secret of the absolute good claims to have the right to impose his opinion as well as his will upon the others, who, if they do not agree, are in error. And to be in error is, according to this view, to be wrong, and hence punishable. If, however, it is recognized that only relative values are accessible to human knowledge and human will, then it is justifiable to enforce a social order against reluctant individuals only if this order is in harmony with the greatest possible number of equal

> individuals, that is to say, with the will of the majority. It may be that the opinion of the minority, and not the opinion of the majority, is correct. Solely because of this possibility, which only philosophical relativism can admit -- that what is right today may be wrong tomorrow -- the minority must have a chance to express freely their opinion and must have full opportunity of becoming the majority. Only if it is not possible to decide in an absolute way what is right and what is wrong is it advisable to discuss the issue and, after discussion, to submit to a compromise.
>
> This is the true meaning of the political system which we call democracy and which we may oppose to political absolutism only because it is political relativism.[12]

The freedom and equality which, according to Kelson, are the essential elements of "philosophical relativism", do not entail the negation of any social order, but do entail a specific method of establishing social order, and specific type of government:

> To be socially or politically free means, it is true, to be subject to a normative order; it means freedom under social law. But it means: to be subject only to one's own, not to a foreign, will; to a normative order, a law in the establishment of which the subject participates.[13]

Kelson draws a distinction between the restriction of freedom by a law under which all individuals are "equal" and the fundamental inequality of all individuals in relation to some absolute or supreme truth or being, the essential element in, what he calls, "philosophical absolutism", and its corollary, "political absolutism".[14]

This "method" of establishing social order has been

called, by S. Hook, the ". . . method of the empirical temper, of the democratic process," and is embodied in a set of fixed rules, ". . . under which we can live with our differences -- mitigate, integrate, transcend them if we wish, or let them alone if that if our wish." Although the method does not guarantee results, the "rules of the game" must be upheld. This is, according to Hook, the ". . . one working absolute on which there can be no compromise."[15]

These "rules", however, do not alone constitute a formula by which democracy can function automatically. The proponents of this kind of "consensus" assert that the rules will not be operative, even in the short run, unless there is a genuine belief, among citizens, in their sanctity. T.D. Weldon points out that;

> Without this condition, democracy is simply unworkable, and it is of no use to tell people who have no strong belief either in the value of men as man or of man as individual to behave as if they had. They cannot do it and had much better not try. They only solution is for them to have dictators and to pray that the dictators will be sensible.[16]

Kelson urges the importance of participation in government -- ". . . in the creation and application of the general and individual norms of the social order constituting the community"[17] -- as the essential point in specifying the conditions for the "democratic consensus". This participation is meaningful only when the intelligence of

the average individual is cultivated to appreciate the value of the "critical method" of evaluating alternative proposals. This demands the existence of a tolerated and official opposition to challenge the majority of the day, and also many less formal outlets for individual expression of opinion throughout the society. Then, he argues, the discussions of the representative assembly will, in fact, be representative of the multifarious, formal and informal political discussions of the society as a whole.

With the kind of consensus that exists under these conditions, as the argument goes, the right of the minority to turn itself into a majority is a real and effective right. At least, in the process of reaching a compromise, or modus vivendi, the majority can be led to modify its position, and the minority, though probably still unconvinced, can accept the situation without intolerable sacrifice of principle. Under these conditions, as C.K. Allen points out, the individual citizen becomes aware that:

> Though he remains free to dissent to the utmost in his opinions, in matters of conduct his freedom can never go to the point of rejecting and resisting the will of the majority on the ground (which is false in fact) that he never undertook to accept it. Thus the 'agreement to differ' is, in one sense, an agreement only by courtesy, since it is involuntary. But in another and very important sense it is voluntary, and morally justifiable, because it is a principle of behavior which the average reasonable man learns, of his own judgment, to approve and to adopt.[17]

This form of consensus, then, requires that the

average citizen be educated to appreciate worthwhile, constructive political dialogue between opposing points of view by participating in this dialogue at all levels of government. The conditions described as necessary for this form of participation are the conditions of a "pluralistic" society, which offers the individual a broad spectrum of diverse, independent, and powerful groups, through which differing points of view can be articulated. According to C. Frankel, this form of social organization protects individual autonomy, and, ". . . encourages the special aptitudes and skills, and also the special frame of mind, on which political democracy depends."[19] The contention is that the "pluralist" society facilitates the high degree of mutual knowledge and understanding which, for example, Carey and Kendall maintain is necessary for "correct reciprocal anticipation"[20] -- a willingness on the part of any serious contenders for power, to modify their position to reach a compromise with opposing positions, without trying to stretch the consensus too far -- and, also, protects the most basic consensus characterizing "democracy", which consists of allegiance to the rules of the "democratic game", whereby obedience is given to laws because those who issue them occupy their positions in accordance with certain procedures and make the laws according to generally recognized rules.[21]

Hence, a "pluralist" society is necessary to

"philosophical relativism", a frame of mind which makes it perfectly possible that agreement can be reached on the kinds of questions with which politics are concerned, even when men start from different cosmic premises. This view of the "democratic consensus" then describes the agreements which hold a democracy together in terms of the participants in the political process subscribing to the view that:

> If a man agrees with you on a concrete issue, then he does. His willingness to cooperate will not be improved if he is told that he does not have a logical right to agree because he holds the wrong metaphysics. There is no official or quasi-official doctrine about God, the universe, or man's ultimate destiny on which democratic arrangements necessarily depend. And that is only a way of saying that democracy is an arrangement aimed at preventing a society from being locked in by any single doctrine. It is a method of government based on the recognition that men are diverse, that ultimate questions are hard to answer, and that all human arrangements are fallible including its own.[22]

The second "non-empirical" theory of the kind of consensus necessary to a stable democracy holds that accommodation or compromise must be purposeful; that democracy cannot be supported by the belief that compromise, conciliation, and adjustment only should be used to arrive at policy upon which individuals cannot agree, and that the "democratic consensus" must be based on attachment to certain moral standards by which to judge the results of compromise.[23]

J.H. Hallowell, although he describes democracy as

the "art of compromise", asks:

> How is it possible to mediate differences, to make compromises, without some standard of justice, the public interest, and the common good? For the very nature of compromise presupposes some commonly acknowledged principles of justice in terms of which mutual concessions can be made.[24]

In this view, some "commonly acknowledged principles of justice" form the basis and rationale for the democratic system, and cannot therefore be themselves compromised. The greater the measure of dissent on these "fundamental ethical principles", the greater the chance that "democratic" institutions will work "undemocratically". What is required, Hallowell argues, ". . . is not submission to the will of the majority because that will is numerically superior but rather submission to the reasoned judgement of the majority."[25] Of this contention, Kelson asks:

> If this is true the question arises as to who is competent to decide whether the judgment of the majority is or is not 'reasoned'. The decision could be made only by the individual obligated to submit to the decision of the majority. Then submission to the decision of the majority depends in the last analysis on the discretion of the individual, which means anarchy, not democracy.[26]

J. Feibleman, who advances much the same sort of argument as Hallowell, asserts that: "Reasoning will persuade men into becoming adherents of democracy; clubbing will not. Education is a slow process but it is still the only one upon which persuasion is able to depend."[27]

However, if the judgment of the majority is always derived from a reasoned consideration of the "common good" or "public interest", as Hallowell would have us believe, -- that is, if the majoritarian principle does commit the political system to some arbitrary metaphysical theory -- then we will probably find, unless we make the absurd assumption that men will always agree on what is the "right" policy to follow in any given political situation, that persuasion to submit to the decision of the majority will require some substantial "clubbing" along with the "reasoning".

Clearly, Hallowell has not canvassed all the possibilities. Vague notions of the "public interest" may enter into compromising, but usually, one would suspect, to legitimize a decision which may have been reached on terms of prudential considerations as, for example, stability. By the same token, it may indeed by impossible to compromise when a moral issue is involved, but in the process of day-to-day decision-making issues may not be so clear cut. Surely it is reasonable to suppose that a number of issues, perceived by individuals as having to some extent moral implications, are often involved, and have to be evaluated. Compromise then might seem justified in terms of a higher value, such as keeping the system together.

Both of the kinds of theories of the "democratic consensus" considered above view democracy as a "perfect"

system. In the case of Kelson, for example, certain empirical conditions (i.e., conditions for a pluralist society) in a system which makes decisions according to the "democratic" method, give rise to a non-empirical condition (i.e., "philosophical relativism"), which is a necessary and sufficient condition for "democracy". Hallowell also argues that a non-empirical condition (i.e., consensus on certain moral values) constitutes a necessary and sufficient condition for "democracy".

Neither theory is useful for our purposes. For we cannot predict the stability of a political system or determine the probabilities of a situation arising in which intense minority views are likely to be suppressed on the basis of a consensus of which we cannot prove the existence. If we wish to assert that some kind of consensus is likely to lead, in certain situations, to particular sorts of action or lack of action, we must be able to point to the elements or conditions of that consensus, and say how it affects action. We can point to neither "philosophical relativism" nor moral imperatives.

At any rate, there is no reason to suppose that any individual is likely to substantially compromise his position on an issue concerning which he feels relatively intensely, solely because he is willing to accept the sanctity of other individuals with opposing interests as sources of what

may well be equally legitimate claims. There may be a good deal of truth in J. Schumpeter's claim that:

> . . . the typical citizen drops down to a lower level of mental performance as soon as he enters the political field. He argues and analyses in a way which he would readily recognize as infantile within the sphere of his real interests. He becomes a primitive again. His thinking becomes associative and affective.[28]

By the same token, there is no reason to suppose that the chances of public policy being adopted in a political system involving the repression of intensely held minority beliefs is in any way lessened by the winning majority being able to "appeal to the gods" to justify its decision.

At this point it is necessary to consider, briefly, what has been called an "economic model of democracy", and subsequently, to turn to a consideration of an empirical view of the "democratic consensus". This sort of consensus obtains under conditions which we can determine empirically wherein the majority of individuals in the political system have far more to lose by not attempting to satisfy the demands of intense minorities, and maintain the stability of the system, than they have to gain. When these conditions are present, we may say that there is a possibility of mutuality of gain.

Some economists compare a political system that refers the choice of alternative policy choices to

determination by vote, to the economic model in terms of mutuality of gain, and hence, unanimous agreement among those who are party to the final contract or decision. J.M. Buchanan and G. Tullock, for example, note that when there is a time sequence of political choices, a market of scores tends to develop.[29] The individual who recognizes the economic value of his vote to others on certain issues, and the economic value of others' votes to him on different issues, will be motivated to engage in trade. Individuals may then seek mutual advantages by exchanging votes on separate issues;

> . . . if ways of 'trading' can be found that do not clearly conflict with accepted standards of behavior, individuals will seek mutual advantages in this way. The possibility of exchanging votes on separate issues opens up such trading prospects. The individual may effectively, but imperfectly, 'sell' his vote on a particular issue, securing in return the votes of other individuals on issues of more direct interest.[30]

Buchanan and Tullock, who describe this phenomenon as "implicit logrolling", contend that it is ". . . characteristic of much of the modern democratic procedure," and that ". . . the results under logrolling and under nonlogrolling differ only if the minority feels more intensely about an issue than the majority."[31]

But surely, it may be objected, the possibility of mutuality of gain through "implicit logrolling" decreases in proportion to the relative importance of the issue in

question to the individuals involved in making the decision? To claim otherwise, it would seem, would require that individuals ascribe an incommensuably greater value to the decision-making process than to the decisions reached under it, a proposition which, as K.J. Arrow points out; ". . . hardly seems like a credible representation of the psychology of most individuals in a social situation."[32] At some point, mutuality of gain may become impossible. Individuals or groups of individuals may feel so intensely about some issue that they do not feel it is worth compromising on alternatives even to keep the system together.

A consensus theory that considers this problem from an empirical point of view is that of S.M. Lipset. Lipset contends that the kinds of issues which preclude the possibility of mutuality of gain, and hence compromise, are those which have "historically" divided a society and have gone unresolved from one historical period to another.[33] He argues that some "cleavage" as well as consensus is necessary to a stable democracy, but that the "cleavage" must be "legitimate" (i.e., it must be controlled by a basic consensus on; ". . . the norms of tolerance which a society or organization accepts"). This "legitimacy", according to Lipset;

> . . . involves the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that the existing political

> institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society. The extent to which contemporary democratic systems are legitimate depends in large measure upon the ways in which key issues which have historically divided the society have been resolved.

The "legitimacy" of a political system may suffer crisis, ". . . if the political system is not able to sustain the expectations of major groups, or if social groups are not allowed access to the political process."[36] These are the conditions, Lipset contends, which serve to "moderate the intensity of partisan battle" by facilitating attendance to divisive issues before they become of such great importance to groups of individuals that political compromise is impossible. For;

> . . . carrying over issues from one historical period to another makes for a political atmosphere characterized by bitterness and frustration rather than tolerance and compromise. Men and parties come to differ with each other, not simply on ways of settling current problems, but on fundamental and opposed outlooks. This means that they see the political victory of their opponents as a major moral threat, and the whole system, as a result, lacks effective value-integration.[37]

Lipset also argues for a "pluralist" society, but not because it cultivates some particular "philosophical" approach to politics, as Kelson, for example, would have us believe.[38] His contention is based on the empirical grounds that:

> Wherever the social structure operates so as to isolate <u>naturally</u> individuals or groups with the same

> political outlooks from contact with those who hold different views, the isolated individuals or groups tend to back political extremists.[39]

For this reason, Lipset makes the further point that:

> The available evidence suggests that the chances for stable democracy are enhanced to the extent that groups and individuals have a number of crosscutting, politically relevant affiliations. To the degree that a significant proportion of the population is pulled among conflicting forces, its members have an interest in reducing the intensity of political conflict. . . . such groups and individuals also have an interest in protecting the rights of political minorities.[40]

This empirical theory of the "democratic consensus" specifies conditions under which issues perceived as being fundamental moral conflicts by groups of individuals (precisely the sorts of issues that the crude measures of intensity of opinion indicate may cause intense commitments)[41] are, as a matter of fact, unlikely to arise. In a community in which there are two or more groups of individuals whose aims and interests are actually incompatible with one another (i.e., individuals or groups are "naturally isolated"), compromise or mutuality of gain is impossible, and there is no way to resolve the situation but to shoot it out.

In a community, however, in which potentially divisive issues are solved as current problems, individuals, probably because they have some vague idea of the preference patterns of the other individuals in the society,

learn what to expect from the political structure and expect the political process to yield decisions on current matters which will usually be acceptable to themselves. Here, it is seldom the case that there is a particular "majority" opinion for a government to reflect, and most political issues involve conflicts of minority claims, with each interest group operating effectively within the system to have some matter decided in its favour. As Benn and Peters point out: "Even on issues which affect the bulk of the people, it is unusual to find as many as twenty per cent of them sufficiently concerned to form any definite opinion."[42] When these conditions obtain, articulated claims are seldom justified by making reference to "ultimates", and the government is able to evaluate these claims in terms of various public policy alternatives.

A government cannot arbitrate between conflicts which are perceived as being of a fundamental moral nature, but can only take sides. When potentially divisive issues go unresolved from one "historical period" to the next, demands are likely to be made of the government that it cannot meet without being seen as having taken sides. The individuals who see themselves as being on the losing side in a moral conflict will become frustrated and alienated, consider themselves suppressed, and therefore have no interest in keeping the system together. However, when these

issues are resolved as current problems, individuals or groups of individuals are likely to make demands of the political system which it is at least capable of satisfying without suppressing some other intensely partisan group. For, as W.H. Harbold points out:

> It would be foolish to deny that men are moved by values, but the assumption that these values are incompatible with coherent public policy can result only from an excessively abstract conception of those values and how they affect men. For most people, at least, values sought after are neither infinite in number nor esoteric in quality but are such as are made available in social customs or in the interpersonal relations of the world of the world of the 'organization man' and the 'other-directed personality'. They are, furthermore, especially on the level at which political action is called for to serve them, overwhelmingly utilitarian. Thus demands on government are manageable because only in small degree are they matters of principle. They are seldom saintly virtues to which a democratic people aspires, but rather quite mundane benefits capable of compromise without sin.[43]

As long as the system is able to maintain the belief that existing political institutions are the most appropriate ones for the society, and individuals living under the government feel that if they wish to try to recruit support for their position on some issue, they are free to do so, and the government continues to provide, on the whole, the mundane benefits to which people have become accustomed and expect it to provide, there is very little chance of an issue arising that would involve making a choice between incommensurable values held by sizeable blocs of individuals with very intense opinions.

The citizen of a stable democratic state need not then be particularly interested in directly participating in politics, or be concerned with any particular philosophical position, although he may wish to challenge certain policies of the government and therefore must be free to do so. He is most interested, however, in making his own life as commodious as possible, and has a vested interest in a system which seems to further this concern. To the extent that he may wish to plead for a change in the system or in its policies, he is therefore likely to seek support through recognized modes of political activity. B. Berelson reports that:

> Some recent theorists and studies have suggested that a sizable group of less interested citizens is desirable as a 'cushion' to absorb the intense action of highly motivated partisans. For the fact is that the highly interested are the most partisan and the least changeable. If everyone in the community were highly and continuously interested, the possibilities of compromise and of gradual solution of political problems might well be lessened to the point of danger. It is an historical axiom that democracy requires a middle class for its proper operation. Perhaps what it really requires is a body of moderately and discontinuously interested citizens within and across social classes, whose approval of or at least acquiescence in political policies must be secured.[44]

Since the study of opinion intensity done by V.O. Key, which we considered earlier,[45] indicated that there was no necessary connection between intensity of opinion and level of involvement in politics, it may be more reasonable to suggest here that what may be required is a body of the

types of individuals who R.E. Lane and D.O. Sears describe as "modestly Concerned Citizens" and contrast to another type of individual, the "True Believer", whose commitments or personality structure are not congenial to a stable political system, and who finds it impossible to operate successfully within the political structure. Lane and Sears describe these contrasting types of individuals in the following terms:

> O'Hara is a modestly Concerned Citizen; he is no True Believer. How does he differ therefrom? In the first place, he is interested in his work, family, coaching a boys' baseball team -- indeed his interests are more varied than a True Believer's. One might almost say of him that his work in the Little League was his 'true belief'. Politics and public affairs occupy a much smaller part of his attention span. He has not one, but multiple interests. Second, his level of concern is relative, not total; for the True Believer, everything rides on the success or failure of the 'Movement', but for O'Hara, when the Republicans won, he shrugged and said 'Well, the Democrats make mistakes, too. Eisenhower may be a good man.' Third, he does not use his political, religious, or ethnic opinions to serve as the sole criterion for including or excluding others: he has friends among all groups. This is a matter of principle with him. . . . His partisanship is more limited. Fourth, he has convictions; there are certain things he thinks he knows but he reports that on all matters it is better to hear two sides than one: his knowledge is not absolute and for all time. He even questions part of his own church's doctrine, although he thinks of himself as a good church member. The True Believer is future-oriented, but O'Hara lives partly for pleasure in the present; he enjoys his family, sports-life now. And yet, he is active in his union, supports the urban redevelopment in his town, votes and talks politics at the shop, cares what happens. He is good for a stable society; but he could never crack the cake of custom or change the social order. That must be done by others.[46]

There is a qualitative difference between the "Concerned Citizen" and the "True Believer" in terms of intense feelings about political issues. The former may, in some sense, be said to feel intensely about some political issues, but his intensity is compatible with adjustment to defeat, perhaps simply because he feels that it is in his own interest to work within the political structure. The latter, however, may see in the resolution of any issue a threat to his "true beliefs", and any marginal defeat will intensify his feelings of frustration and alienation.

In a political system where conditions are present that facilitate mutuality of gain in the resolution of issues, we may say that dissenting minorities would probably find it in their interests to give provisional obedience under protest, and that as a matter of fact "True Believers" would probably be few in number, and would not likely be able to muster numerical support of any great significance.

However, as Lane and Sears point out, there may be issues occurring in the history of any political community which cause the kinds of intense feelings that bring to light large numbers of "latent True Believers".[47] These may involve crises arising from war, severe economic depression, or strong identification with some "suppressed" class, religion, or race.[48] If these issues cannot be

resolved as current problems in the political system, an alienated or permanent minority may arise. This H.B. Mayo calls the "real" problem of intensity in democratic systems.[49] As Benn and Peters point out:

> A democratic system becomes increasingly difficult to work the greater the measure of dissent on fundamentals; but if dissent is not confined to a tiny eccentric minority, but affects a group large enough to constitute a threat to the order, denying it political rights is only a recognition that the order is in peril; it is not to save it. The only hope of a permanent remedy would be to attend to the grievance out of which the challenge has developed.[50]

Thus, when there is a conflict between intensely held minority beliefs and relative balances of policy gain, the majority must be willing to sacrifice some measure of policy gain, and consider their gain to be simply perpetuation of the stability of the political system.

The conditions under which mutual gain is possible include, to a greater or lesser extent, those which have been mentioned; a pluralist society which may facilitate "implicit logrolling", the resolution of potentially divisive issues as current problems, a decision-making structure governed by certain rules and safeguards which we usually consider to be "democratic" (i.e., procedures governed by the conditions of limited majority rule), and the ability of the government to provide the mundane benefits which citizens consider necessary to a commodious life. When

these conditions obtain, we may say on empirical grounds that the probability of suppression of minorities with intense views is very low. We may therefore assert that these conditions are necessary to a stable political system and that the procedures we call "democratic" are the best we can contrive given our limited knowledge of considerations which are relevant to the resolution of disputes between individuals or groups of individuals. We cannot, however, say that these conditions are also sufficient to a stable "democracy". We certainly cannot predict the behavior of individuals to the extent that we can claim that the existence of any social or political situation constitutes both necessary and sufficient conditions for certain action or lack of action by any number of individuals. If this were possible, a formal set of procedures or rules for the resolution of political issues could be contrived that would take all relevant considerations into account and would make the political system work "automatically". We might find that the weighing of opinions in terms of the intensity with which they are held would have to be an integral part of such a decision-making method. However, this is not possible, at least for the present time, and until it is possible, intensity of opinion remains a continuing problem for the democratic theorist.

CONCLUSION

In discussing "democracy", we have been discussing a kind of political organization or system, and not an ideal schema of things. In any political system, the method of making decisions can be justified solely on empirical grounds as an indispensable part of the institutional complex of that political system. Its value depends entirely upon the desirability of the latter. A thorough consideration of the problem of opinion intensity would involve the democratic theorist in a study of many factors beyond the scope of this essay, as, for example, the social and psychological prerequisites of "democracy". A consideration of political elitism may be necessary, for we may find that, given the practicalities of elections, intense minorities get most of the good things. The problem of "intensity" may also raise many difficult and important ethical questions. The purpose here, however, has been more to introduce the problem than to attempt the formulation of final answers to any of the many questions raised by it.

In this essay I have argued that some theorists, who have addressed themselves specifically to the problem of "intensity", have tended to confuse the ethical aspects of the problem with the more practical or empirical aspects of it -- that because of the difficulty (or perhaps

impossibility) of making ethical interpersonal comparisons, these theorists have tended to circumvent this problem, which is worthy, and capable, of examination on empirical grounds. The statement-form; A prefers x to y more than B prefers y to x, is empirical, and the question of the extent to which we can prove or disprove statements of this form is an empirical matter. It is in principle capable of solution, and at least we may claim that if we are possessed of some knowledge of each of the individuals involved, we can make a rough appraisal. Many of the modern techniques of the behavioral sciences allow social scientists to make these kinds of appraisals.

However, because of the impossibility, at present, of precisely specifying to what degree, and in what content, distinctions between individuals are relevant to political action, we can perhaps justify the "democratic" method of making political decisions on the grounds that it is the best method we can currently devise to ensure the maintenance of a type of political system in which certain other empirical conditions obtain. There is nothing in the philosophical foundations of the kind of political organization we call "democracy" which would preclude on a-priori or logical grounds the change or adjustment of the decision-making technique if a change were necessary to further assure the maintenance of this form of political

organization.

At this time, then, the democratic theorist who wishes to consider the problem of "intensity" can perhaps most fruitfully turn his attention to an examination of the sorts of empirical conditions which must be obtained in a political system before the "democratic" method can be said to be the best possible method of making political decisions in that system.

Some initial clarification of the problem of "intensity" in terms of how the phenomenon might affect the kind of political organization we term "democracy", and on what grounds the democratic theorist might approach the problem is required. This essay constitutes an attempt at such a clarification.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

[1]For example, cf., V.O. Key, Jr., Public Opinion and American Democracy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), Ch. IX; H. Cantril, "The Intensity of an Attitude", The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XLI (1946), 129-135; D. Katz, "The Measurement of Intensity", in Gauging Public Opinion, ed. by H. Cantril (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 51-65; and E.A. Suchman, "The Intensity Component In Attitude and Opinion Research", in Measurement and Prediction, ed. by S.A. Stouffer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), pp. 213-276.

[2]D. Katz, op. cit., p. 51.

[3]H. Cantril, op. cit., pp. 132-135.

[4]Ibid., p. 129.

[5]E.A. Suchman, op. cit., p. 259. For a more detailed explication of this device, cf., R. Mehling, "A Simple Test for Measuring Intensity of Attitudes", Public Opinion Quarterly, XXIII, No. 4 (Winter, 1959), pp. 576-578.

[6]V.O. Key, Jr., op. cit., p. 259.

[7]Ibid., p. 230.

[8]Ibid., p. 226.

[9]Ibid., p. 231.

[10]Ibid., p. 232.

[11]Ibid., p. 217.

[12]Ibid., p. 219.

[13]S.I. Benn and R.S. Peters, Social Principles and the Democratic State (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1959), pp. 342-343.

[14]R.A. Dahl, A Preface to Democratic Theory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 92.

[15]Ibid., p. 92.

[16]Ibid., p. 102.

[17]Ibid., p. 102.

[18]W. Kendall and G.W. Carey, "The 'Intensity' Problem and Democratic Theory", The American Political Science Review, LXII (March, 1968), p. 12.

[19]Ibid., p. 9.

[20]Ibid., p. 16.

[21]Ibid., p. 20.

[22]Y. Murakami, Logic and Social Choice (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1968), p. 113.

[23]Ibid., pp. 117-118.

[24]Ibid., p. 118.

[25]W. Kendall and G.W. Carey, op. cit., p. 6.

[26]K.J. Arrow, "Value and Collective Decision-making", in Philosophy, Politics and Society, ed. by P. Laslett and W.G. Runciman (3rd series; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), p. 231.

Chapter II

[1]Cf. Plato, Republic, 558 c., "For when equality is given to unequals the result is inequality, unless due measure is applied."

[2]A.D. Lindsay, The Essentials of Democracy (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1929), p. 15.

[3]C.K. Allen, Democracy and the Individual (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), p. 11.

[4]N. Rotenstreich, "Rule by Majority or by Principles", Social Research, XXI (1954), p. 411.

[5]M.C. Swabey, Theory of the Democratic State (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939), p. 185.

[6]Ibid., p. 18.

[7]Ibid., p. 17.

[8]J.R. Lucas, The Principles of Politics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 258.

[9]M.C. Swabey, op. cit., pp. 181-182.

[10]Ibid., pp. 175-176.

[11]R.W. Wollheim and I. Berlin, "Equality", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, New Series, LVI (1955-1956), p. 3013.

[12]J.R. Lucas, op. cit., p. 245.

[13]S.I. Benn and R.S. Peters, op. cit., p. 340.

[14]R.A. Dahl and C.E. Lindblom, Politics, Economics and Welfare (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), pp. 42-43.

[15]Ibid., p. 43.

[16]Ibid., p. 46.

[17]Ibid., p. 46.

[18]Ibid., p. 46.

[19]J. Schumpeter, "Two Concepts of Democracy", in Political Philosophy, ed. by A. Quinton (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 170-171.

[20]S.I. Benn and R.S. Peters, op. cit., p. 345.

[21]Cf. ante., p. 9.

[22]D. Spitz, Democracy and the Challenge of Power (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 107.

[23]M. Schiller, "On the Logic of Being a Democrat", Philosophy, XLIV (Jan., 1969), p. 50.

[24]S.I. Benn and R.S. Peters, op. cit., p. 354.

[25]R.A. Dahl, op. cit., p. 103.

[26]S.I. Benn and R.S. Peters, op. cit., p. 277.

[27]For further explication of this consideration, cf., J.G. Heinberg, "History of the Majority Principle", The American Political Science Review, XX (Feb., 1926),

pp. 67-68.

[28]S.I. Benn and R.S. Peters, op. cit., p. 338.

[29]H.B. Mayo, An Introduction to Democratic Theory (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 29.

[30]H.B. Mayo, op. cit., p. 204.

Chapter III

[1]Cf. ante., Ch. II, pp. 11-13.

[2]Cf. ante., Ch. II.

[3]H.B. Mayo, op. cit., p. 29.

[4]Ibid., pp. 177-178.

[5]S.I. Benn and R.S. Peters, op. cit., p. 355.

[6]D. Spitz, op. cit., p. 57.

[7]Cf. ante., Ch. I, pp. 9-11.

[8] It was something of this nature, on a larger scale, for which J.C. Calhoun argued when proposing a system of "concurrent majorities". Each and every interest, he argued, must be allowed to have some substantial control over the resolution of public issues:

> . . . there are two different modes in which the sense of the community may be taken; one, simply by the right of suffrage, unaided; the other, by the right through a proper organism. Each collects the sense of the majority. But one regards numbers only, and considers the whole community as a unit, having but one common interest throughout; and collects the sense of the greater number of the whole, as that of the community. The other, on the contrary, regards interests as well as numbers; -- considering the community as made up of different and conflicting interests, as far as the action of the government is concerned; and takes the sense of each, through its majority or appropriate organ, and the united sense of all, as the entire community. The former of these I shall call the numerical or

> absolute majority; and the latter, the concurrent, or constitutional majority. I call it the constitutional majority because it is an essential element in every constitutional government, -- be its form what it may.

In terms of the problem of intensity, however, it is readily conceivable that under a system of concurrent majorities, the actions of a group, representing one interest, that feels very intensely about an issue, may be vetoed by another group, that feels relatively apathetic on that particular issue, for strategic or other purposes.

[9]R.W. Wollheim and I. Berlin, op. cit., particularly pp. 293-299.

[10]I have borrowed these two concepts from A. Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), pp. 66-67.

[11]Cf. ante., Ch. I, pp. 12-13.

[12]Hans Kelson, "Foundations of Democracy", Ethics, LXVI Pt. II (Oct., 1955), pp. 38-39.

[13]Ibid., p. 19.

[14]Ibid., p. 18.

[15]S. Hook, Political Power and Personal Freedom (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1951), p. 100.

[16]T.D. Weldon, States and Morals (London: J. Murray, 1946), p. 260.

[17]H. Kelson, op. cit., p. 3.

[18]C.K. Allen, op. cit., p. 46.

[19]C. Frankel, The Democratic Prospect (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 23.

[20]W. Kendall and G.W. Carey, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

[21]C. Frankel, op. cit., p. 25.

[22]Ibid., pp. 28-29.

[23]For example, cf., C.W. Cassinelli, The Politics of Freedom (Seattle: University of Washington Press,

1961), p. 137.

[24]J.H. Hallowell, The Moral Foundations of Democracy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 34.

[25]Ibid., p. 120.

[26]H. Kelson, op. cit., p. 96 ff.

[27]James Feiblemann, Positive Democracy (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1940), p. 227.

[28]J. Schumpeter, op. cit., p. 166.

[29]J.M. Buchanan and G. Tullock, The Calculus of Consent (Toronto: Ambassador Books Ltd., 1962), pp. 122-123.

[30]Ibid., p. 123.

[31]Ibid., p. 124.

[32]K.J. Arrow, Social Choice and Individual Values (2nd ed.; New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1951), p. 91.

[33]S.M. Lipset, Political Man (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1960), pp. 64-71.

[34]Ibid., p. 2.

[35]Ibid., p. 64.

[36]Ibid., p. 65.

[37]Ibid., p. 71.

[38]Cf. ante., Ch. III, p. 44.

[39]S.M. Lipset, op. cit., p. 76.

[40]Ibid., p. 77.

[41]Cf. ante., Ch. I, pp. 11-13.

[42]S.I. Benn and R.S. Peters, op. cit., p. 337.

[43]W.H. Harbold, "Democracy and the Service State", Ethics, LXX (1959-1960), pp. 140-141.

[44]B. Berelson, "Democratic Theory and Public Opinion", Public Opinion Quarterly, XVI (Fall, 1952), p. 317.

[45]Cf. ante., Ch. I, p. 10.

[46]R.E. Lane and D.O. Sears, Public Opinion (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 98.

[47]Ibid., p. 100.

[48]See also: S.M. Lipset, op. cit., p. 71.

[49]H.B. Mayo, op. cit., p. 179.

[50]S.I. Benn, and R.S. Peters, op. cit., p. 354.

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